

NEWS RELEASE

Indiana Criminal Justice Institute



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2007

“Click It or Ticket” Mobilization to Target Nighttime Drivers Data reveals belt usage drops and fatalities increase during evening and overnight hours

INDIANAPOLIS, IN. – Law enforcement throughout Indiana conducted a special nighttime seat belt enforcement zone on Thursday evening in conjunction with the Memorial Day “Click It or Ticket” seat belt mobilization. The statewide seat belt enforcement effort precedes a new Indiana law that requires seat belt use for everyone in all seating positions within a vehicle.

“While overall safety belt use in Indiana is reported at 84.3 percent, usage rates plummet to approximately 35 percent in evening and overnight hours,” according to Mike Cunegin, executive director of ICJI. “Even more troubling, those being killed or seriously injured in nighttime crashes are teens and other young drivers,” he continued. “To address this concern, today Indiana law enforcement announced a statewide *Click It or Ticket* mobilization that will include nighttime safety belt enforcement zones, nighttime saturation patrols and other enforcement activity designed increase usage during the evening and overnight hours,” Cunegin said.

This initiative comes as the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) announces data that shows a disturbing number of young motorists are being killed or seriously injured in the evening and overnight hours because they fail to buckle their safety belts. The Indiana data is mirrored by other states throughout the nation.

“In 2006, 897 people lost their lives in traffic crashes in Indiana and sadly, many of those deaths could have been prevented if motorists would have simply buckled up,” said Ryan Klitzsch, Traffic Safety division director at ICJI.

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The Governor's Council on Impaired & Dangerous Driving wants to remind motorists that beginning July 1st, all occupants of all vehicles will be required to buckle up in all seats – both front and back. "That means passengers seated anywhere in any motor vehicle, including pick up trucks, will risk a ticket if they fail to buckle up," Klitzsch added.

"Law enforcement across Indiana is troubled by the traffic deaths in our state, and we are equally disturbed by data that tells us fewer people buckle up during nighttime driving hours," said Paul Whitesell, Superintendent of the Indiana State Police. "As a result, police around the state will be stepping up nighttime safety belt enforcement resulting in a never-before-seen number of nighttime safety belt enforcement zones, saturation patrols and other stepped-up activity. There will be no warnings and no exceptions, motorists caught driving without a safety belt will be issued a ticket," added Whitesell.

"Motorists in Indiana can be pulled over and issued a citation for not buckling up, but this isn't about issuing tickets, it's about saving lives," said Don Bickel of the Marion County Traffic Safety Partnership. "However, given the choice between writing a motorist a ticket and having to notify next of kin that their loved one is never coming home following a fatal crash, I'll take the ticket every day," said Bickel.

Studies show safety belt use remains the single most effective act a person can do to protect themselves and their children in a motor vehicle crash. "Many studies have shown safety belts reduce the risk of death in a motor vehicle crash, but physicians and other medical professionals don't need studies to point out what we see each and every day in emergency departments in Indiana. Injuries to crash victims can be more severe and are more often fatal when a safety belt is not worn," Dr. Joe O'Neil from the IU School of Medicine.

"More than 270 law enforcement agencies in Indiana are participating in this Memorial Day Click It or Ticket mobilization. The mobilization will run from Friday, May 18 through Sunday, June 3.

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